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TAGS: [KSCA](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [PARM](#) [ETTC](#) [IN](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: SUPPORTING THE U.S.-INDIA CIVIL NUCLEAR
COOPERATION INITIATIVE

REF: SECSTATE 34761

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Reftel points were delivered to French officials at the MFA and CEA (Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique) who recommended to USG attention French President Chirac's immediate public statement in support of the U.S.-India agreement as well as his own visit to India a week prior to promote nuclear cooperation. The French asked for clarification on some details that they said could be contentious for other states parties to the NPT and proposed close U.S.-French coordination in moving forward, including in advance of the next NSG meeting. END SUMMARY.

FRENCH SUPPORT CLEAR AND PUBLIC

¶2. (C) On March 6 poloff met with Etienne de Gonneville of the French MFA Nuclear non-proliferation bureau to discuss REFTEL points, and EST officer met with Executive Deputy Director Didier Kechemair of CEA. De Gonneville said that the GoF had always been and would continue to be supportive of moves to open India's access to the civilian nuclear mainstream and that it has consistently made such support known at the highest levels of government. De Gonneville and Kechemair pointed to French President Jacques Chirac's communique of March 2 which praised the U.S.-India nuclear cooperation agreement as providing India a means to address its growing energy demands while also helping the environment by limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, de Gonneville indicated that, during Chirac's recent India visit (February 19-21; REFTELS B, C), a joint France-India declaration was made which stated that "India and France confirm that they are engaging in discussions to conclude a bilateral cooperation agreement on the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, subject to their respective international commitments and obligations." Any move to modify these international commitments in order to facilitate civilian nuclear cooperation with India, he said, would be welcomed.

CONCERNS CENTERED ON THE DETAILS

¶3. (C) De Gonneville and Kechemair said that French experts at various agencies were eager to learn more details of the U.S.-India agreement. De Gonneville said that the French embassy in New Delhi had paid close attention to President

Bush's visit as well as statements made by U/S Nicolas Burns in advance of the President's arrival. Initial French analysis, according to de Gonneville, indicated that the U.S.-India agreement did not require India to take on monumental changes and that it would not have a significant (strategic) impact on India's military nuclear activities. While a majority of India's reactors would be placed under international control (14 of 22 reactors), eight reactors would be left ungoverned by international safeguards. He added that there was concern that this lacking coverage in the military sphere could lead to difficulties in convincing the 44 countries of the NPT (the number required to ratify a change to the treaty) that India was taking the "credible and defensible" steps necessary to allow it to participate in global civilian nuclear activities. De Gonneville said that the French, like much of the world, were scrutinizing available details in an attempt to determine how the United States envisions India's future. For example, he said, the French noted that U/S Burns, while careful not to lump India in with NPT states parties, at one point referred to India as a "nuclear weapons power." This, he said, caused many to speculate whether a new category of nuclear weapons state was being defined at an "intermediary level" between the P5 states and non-nuclear powers.

¶4. (C) Focusing more on Reftel A, de Gonneville asked for clarification on several points. Under point (2), "Place all future civilian thermal power and civilian breeder reactors under safeguards," he asked who would decide which reactors would be determined to be civilian and therefore under safeguards -- would it be solely up to India or would there be another mechanism that would make the determination? He also asked if there would be exceptions to the point (3) that "all Indian civilian facilities" be placed "under safeguards

in perpetuity." Under point (4), which states the CIRUS reactor would be shut down in 2010, he asked if that closure was something that had been scheduled before or whether it was the result of negotiations.

¶5. (C) De Gonneville asked if there would be a clause addressing India's ability to secure nuclear fuel from outside of India and what form the language in that clause would take. He added that the GoF would like to know more about how India's fast breeder reactors would be treated, adding that, in general, India's ability to produce fissile material would go up significantly once the barriers for participation in international nuclear markets was lifted.

¶6. (C) Both de Gonneville and Kechemair requested that the GoF be kept up to date concerning both the details of the agreement as well as progress being made regarding U.S. Senate approval. Noting the closeness of the U.S. and French positions on this issue, Kechemair said France would like to collaborate closely with the U.S. in advance of the next meeting of the NSG.

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